

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) Apparatus for continuous vertical casting of metal strips, comprising

a mould (10) having top and bottom ends, an open-ended mould cavity (C) with a mould entrance opening (E) at the top end and a strip exit opening at the bottom end,

a tundish (11) for holding molten metal, said tundish having a discharge opening (11A) in direct communication with the mould cavity (C) to feed molten metal into the mould entrance opening (E) past an interface between the tundish (11) and the mould (10),

a sealing device (14) forming a seal at said tundish-mould interface to prevent molten metal from entering said interface, and

a molten-metal feeding device (12) for supplying molten metal to the tundish (11) and maintaining a level of molten metal therein,

~~characterised in that~~ said sealing device (14) comprises

an upwardly facing horizontal flat sealing element support surface (10A) on the mould (10) at the top end thereof, said sealing element support surface (10A) extending about the mould entrance opening (E),

a flat downwardly facing surface (11B) on the tundish, said downwardly facing surface (11B) extending about the discharge opening (11A) of the tundish, and

a sealing element (14A) formed of a sheet of graphite and being in constant sealing engagement with both said horizontal sealing element support surface (10A) on the mould (10) and said downwardly facing surface (11B) of the tundish (11), said sealing element (14A) extending about the mould entrance opening (E) and the discharge opening (11A) of the tundish (11).

2. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the mould (10) comprises a pair of side walls (15), each side wall comprises a vertical graphite block (17) formed from a stack of elongate graphite laminae (20) and one end of said block forms part of said sealing element support surface (10A) of the mould.
3. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the graphite laminae (20) of the stack extend from the entrance opening (E) of the mould cavity (C) to the exit opening and wherein said part of the sealing element support surface (10A) on the mould (10) is formed by the ends of the laminae.
4. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 3, wherein a plurality of coolant tubes (19) extend horizontally through the graphite block (17) through apertures formed in the graphite laminae (20).
5. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~, claim 1 wherein the mould (10) further comprises a pair of end walls (16) of graphite which bridge gaps between the side walls (15), said end walls having flat horizontal upper end faces which are level with said one end of each of said graphite blocks (17) and form parts of said sealing element support surface (10A) on the mould.
6. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~, claim 1 wherein said downwardly facing surface (11B) of the tundish (11) is slidable with respect to the sealing element (14).